

# United States Fire Administration



**Technical Report Series**

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## **The Aftermath of Firefighter Fatality Incidents**

**Preparing for the Worst**

**Special Report**



**Federal Emergency Management Agency**

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**United States Fire Administration**

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## **United States Fire Administration Major Fire Investigation Program**

The United States Fire Administration develops reports on selected major fires throughout the country. The fires usually involve multiple deaths or a large loss of property. But the primary criterion for deciding to write a report is whether it will result in significant "lessons learned." In some cases these lessons bring to light new knowledge about fire -- the effect of building construction or contents, human behavior in fire, etc. In other cases, the lessons are not new, but are serious enough to highlight once again because of another fire tragedy. In some cases, special reports are developed to discuss events, drills, or new technologies or tactics that are of interest to the fire service.

The reports are sent to fire magazines and are distributed at national and regional fire meetings. The reports are available on request from USFA. Announcements of their availability are published widely in fire journals and newsletters.

This body of work provides detailed information on the nature of the fire problem for policymakers who must decide on allocations of resources between fire and other pressing problems, and within the fire service to improve codes and code enforcement, training, public fire education, building technology, and other related areas.

The Fire Administration, which has no regulatory authority, sends an experienced fire investigator into a community after a major incident only after having conferred with the local fire authorities to insure that USFA's assistance and presence would be supportive and would in no way interfere with any review of the incident they are themselves conducting. The intent is not to arrive during the event or even immediately after, but rather after the dust settles, so that a complete and objective review of all the important aspects of the incident can be made. Local authorities review USFA's report while it is in draft form. The USFA investigator or team is available to local authorities should they wish to request technical assistance for their own investigation.

For additional copies of this report write to the United States Fire Administration, 16825 South Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, Maryland 21727.

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# **The Aftermath of Firefighter Fatality Incidents**

**Preparing for the Worst**

## **Special Report**

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**This is Report 089 of the Major Fires Investigation Project conducted by Varley-Campbell and Associates, Inc./TriData Corporation under contract EMW-94-C-4423 to the United States Fire Administration, Federal Emergency Management Agency.**



**Federal Emergency Management Agency**

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**United States Fire Administration**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Despite the recent emphasis on health and safety within the fire service, almost 100 firefighters continue to die each year in the line of duty, while many others suffer severe injuries. A relatively small number of these deaths and injuries occur in firefighter fatality incidents; however, the impact of these incidents on the affected fire departments, their firefighters, and the fire service at-large is very significant.

The continued incidence of these tragedies, and several cases in which there were long-term effects on fire departments, prompted the United States Fire Administration to study the aftermath of firefighter fatality incidents. Attention was paid to both the immediate and long-term after-effects on fire departments and firefighters.

Firefighter fatality incidents have occurred in all types of fire departments in recent years, from rural volunteer forces to major metropolitan career departments. This study focused on the experiences of six fire departments that suffered at least one multiple firefighter-fatality incident during the past 10 years. Each of the incidents discussed here already had been extensively investigated from an operational standpoint prior to this study, and no attempt is made to further critique the specific operational details of any incident. Rather, the focus is on the operational, organizational, and cultural impacts on the fire departments and their members. Commonalties and trends in the experiences of the fire departments were examined to describe any changes that occurred within the department after the incident, identify potential areas of concern, and disseminate the lessons learned.

Although it is impossible to prepare for the emotional effects of a firefighter fatality incident, the goal of this report is to provide useful information to fire departments and firefighters that may help in dealing with the consequences of such a tragedy. While the findings presented here are drawn from multiple firefighter-fatality incidents, this does not diminish their potential relevance to any incident involving a firefighter line-of-duty death.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Impact on Operations	The grieving fire department's members, and often the community, need to feel that any operational problems which led to the fatalities are being addressed. A firefighter fatality incident may require changes to operational policies or procedures, or increased emphasis on adhering to existing policies and procedures. While the full investigation and its recommendations take time, there will be a demand for some immediate and visible action. The incident investigation may not only trigger changes in operations relevant to the fatalities, but also changes in other operational aspects.
Impact on Safety Consciousness	A common after-effect of firefighter fatality incidents is a renewed interest in safety among fire department members at every organizational level. In addition to formal changes made to SOPs or policies, informal cultural changes often occur with respect to firefighter attitudes toward safety. However, this consciousness may diminish with time unless the department takes formal action to preserve it.
Impact on Equipment	An intense focus on firefighter personal protective equipment by the media, regulatory agencies, and others is common after a firefighter fatality incident. This results in a tendency to focus on equipment or equipment failure as THE cause of the fatalities, when investigation and analysis usually reveals several factors acting in combination.

Impact on Training	The operational circumstances of several of the incidents studied led to an increased focus on training within the affected fire departments, with particular emphasis on basic firefighting skills and procedures, building construction principles, general hazard awareness, and improving fireground communications.
Impact on Morale and Productivity	Firefighters will initially be subject to a variety of emotional stressors after a firefighter fatality incident. Generally, while the loss of a comrade in the line of duty may challenge the feeling of invulnerability enjoyed by many firefighters, they are very resilient and tend to “bounce back” relatively quickly from the tragedy. Still, some fire department members will need more time to emotionally heal than others. These members should be given the time and support they need to grieve in their own way.
Firefighter Aggressiveness	Although individual firefighters will react differently to a tragedy, in most cases a firefighter fatality incident does not appear to significantly affect the willingness of firefighters to place themselves “in harm's way”. For the most part, they retain the aggressive, “can do” attitude that characterizes the predominant fire service culture in the United States. The use of the aggressive, interior firefighting tactics that are part of the same culture should be balanced with the knowledge that the nature of fires and fire buildings has changed considerably in recent years, especially with the increased use of lightweight construction and synthetic interior furnishings.



Impact of After-Action Reporting	After-action reports are extremely valuable tools for dealing with the emotional aftermath of a firefighter fatality incident. When approached from a “lessons learned” perspective, the information disseminated is helpful to fire departments and firefighters alike for understanding what happened, and for reducing rumors. An additional benefit of after-action reporting is the potential for helping to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future.
Importance of Preparedness	Firefighter fatality incidents are rare, unthinkable occurrences for most departments. Nonetheless, fire departments should have plans and guidelines in place to handle the myriad essential functions following such an incident: investigation and notification procedures, personnel debriefing and counseling, media relations, funeral preparations, etc.
Media Relations	Fire departments can expect extensive media coverage after a firefighter fatality incident. More than ever it is a time for a department spokesperson to be the focal point for public attention. Good relationships and procedures for handling media representatives may help mitigate any potentially negative consequences of this coverage. Media coverage may re-occur on the anniversary of the incident.
Legal Implications	Criminal or civil cases may result from the incident. Fire departments should be prepared to participate in legal proceedings ranging from homicide and arson trials to probate hearings. A key issue is the importance of complete, accurate documentation of the incident and its subsequent investigations.

Under the Looking Glass	Intense scrutiny of virtually every aspect of fire department operations and administration can be expected following a firefighter fatality incident. This scrutiny comes from a variety of sources both outside and from within the fire department. External forces often seek to assign blame, while the fire department's internal focus is usually on the lessons learned and preventing future tragedies.
Crisis Management/Counseling	Most fire departments are aware of the value of immediate post-incident stress debriefing. Fewer realize the importance of having long-term counseling available for helping firefighters deal with the emotional after-effects of a firefighter fatality incident. Although every individual will have different needs, counseling and long-term psychological support should be made available to firefighters, family members, and civilian employees.
Taking Care of Your Own	There is a tendency among survivors to become wrapped up in the details of funeral preparations, helping the victims' families, and other functions, at the expense of providing support to their own families, and to their colleagues, who may also be suffering emotionally. Members of the fire department, at all levels, should remember to take care of those people most important to them.

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide information on the operational, organizational, and cultural impacts on fire departments during the aftermath of a firefighter fatality incident. The goal of the United States Fire Administration is to help fire departments suffering similar tragedies by offering suggestions for dealing with some of the issues that can be expected to arise after such an incident. While the applicability of these suggestions to individual fire departments may vary, they are based upon the experiences of six departments that have “weathered the storm” in the past.

To ensure the broadest possible input for the report, interviews were conducted with fire department managers, medical personnel, union representatives, and firefighters in companies affected by the tragedies. The operational details of the particular incidents were de-emphasized, since they had already been investigated in depth. Emphasis was instead placed on identifying the lessons learned about the impacts on the department and its members. Special attention was paid to identifying the long-term effects. The investigator's role during these meetings was as a facilitator, with the content of the interviews determined primarily by the participants.

The incidents listed below were used to provide a starting point for the examination of the after-effects of a firefighter fatality incident. Detailed information on these incidents is available from a variety of sources including the United States Fire Administration’s Major Fires Investigation Series, *Fire Engineering* magazine, *Firehouse* magazine, and the *NFPA Journal*, among others.

***Milford, MI, October 25, 1987***— Three firefighters died during a training burn in a farmhouse after they were caught in a flashover.

***Brackenridge, PA, December 20, 1991***— Four firefighters performing interior operations died after a floor collapse in a commercial building.

***Memphis, TN, December 26, 1992***— Two firefighters operating an attack line died after a church roof collapsed.

*New York, NY, March 28, 1994*—Three firefighters died after they were caught in a backdraft in a three-story residential building.

*Memphis, TN, April 11, 1994*—Two firefighters died while conducting interior operations in a residential high-rise.

*Seattle, WA, January 5, 1995*—Four firefighters performing interior operations died after a floor collapse inside a multi-use commercial building.

*Pittsburgh, PA, February 14, 1995*—Three firefighters died while conducting interior operations at a house fire.

## **IMPACTS ON OPERATIONS**

A firefighter fatality incident may provide the impetus for significant changes to fire department operations. Additional pressure to change is provided by the intense scrutiny brought to bear on the department by the media, other government bodies, regulatory agencies, labor unions, and from department members. This section summarizes some of the areas where change can be expected to occur after a firefighter fatality incident, based on the experiences of the six fire departments that participated in the study.

Some of the changes made by fire departments after a firefighter fatality incident may not directly result from specific problems that occurred during the incident. Because of the intense scrutiny of virtually every aspect of fire department operations after a fatality occurs, sometimes factors are identified that may not have directly impacted the outcome of the incident, but that pose safety or efficiency problems not previously noticed or given attention.

### **Procedures**

Firefighter fatalities often lead to significant changes in operational procedures. In some cases, operational changes attributed to the aftermath of a firefighter fatality incident were already being studied or implemented when the fatalities occurred. The tragic

outcome of the incident further demonstrated the need for change, and accelerated the implementation of the changes.

An intense review of virtually all the fire department's existing policies, guidelines, and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) can be expected following a firefighter fatality incident. This may or may not be part of the formal investigation. The reviewers will usually include department members of various ranks and positions, union representatives, and often government regulators (especially state or federal OSHA). The media may closely watch and report on any findings or actions taken as a result of these reviews.

A firefighter fatality incident can serve as a powerful motivation to change or create SOPs or operating guidelines. While a firefighter fatality tends to lend a particular urgency to this process, changes should not be undertaken without due consideration, and the involvement of department members. Training may need to accompany any changes to operational SOPs, to help ensure they are properly understood and followed. It is also important to consider whether an SOP created or modified to address one problem may cause problems in other areas.

The Memphis Division of Fire Services successfully took action after two firefighters died while fighting a fire in a residential high-rise building. Memphis began the process of creating a new procedure for firefighting operations in high-rises by forming a committee that involved members of all ranks, with an emphasis on those assigned to areas with high-rise buildings. The operational procedure created as a result of this process is highly regarded by the firefighters.

An example of a procedural change not related to the specific circumstances of an incident occurred after four firefighters died during a commercial building fire in Brackenridge, PA. Although the locations and assignments of the firefighters who died were known at the time of the collapse that killed them, the intense review of operational procedures following the incident prompted several fire departments in Allegheny County (PA) to implement formal personnel accountability systems.

The fatal house fire in Pittsburgh prompted the Pittsburgh Bureau of Fire to change several operational policies and procedures, including:<sup>1</sup>

- Mandatory activation of PASS device in a Hazard Zone (the PBFs newest SCBA are equipped with an integrated PASS device)
- The response of an additional Battalion Chief on all structure fires, who assumes the role of Safety Officer
- Safety Unit/Command Board response to all structure fires
- Dispatch of a standby company or "Go-Team" (Rapid Intervention Team) on *all* structure fires.

Eighteen months after Pittsburgh's fatal house fire, the same platoon responded to an incident with almost identical characteristics. This fire was much easier to manage and the positive outcome helped reinforce the procedural changes undertaken after the Bricelyn Street incident.

### **Safety Consciousness**

As might be expected, a firefighter fatality incident will usually have a great impact on the awareness and safety consciousness of fire department managers and firefighters alike. Formal changes resulting from this increased awareness may include the creation of new policies and procedures, the re-affirmation of existing procedures, the formation of new positions (e.g., safety officer) and programs, or increasing the scope of existing safety programs.

The formal changes to procedures often have been accompanied by informal fire department cultural changes. These changes take place at the company level, as firefighters who may normally take "shortcuts" from safety-related procedures become more aware of the potentially negative outcomes that can result from such behavior. The death of a fellow firefighter serves as a compelling reason to change personal habits. As a result, the common firehouse atmosphere of safety practices viewed as an imposition from management changes to an environment where self-preservation, peer pressure, and a

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<sup>1</sup> This fire was described in the USFA Major Fire Investigation Report entitled *Three Firefighters Die in Pittsburgh House Fire*.

desire to secure the safety of the entire firefighting team become primary motivators for using safe operating practices and procedures.

Some of the personal, safety-related behavioral changes shared by firefighters included: an increased respect for elevator-use procedures, even on non-fire or fire alarm incidents; a greater tendency for members to ensure that they are using all of their protective clothing and equipment on every fire-related call (even at buildings known for “nuisance” alarms); an increased respect for the seriousness of the job; and the importance of using safe operating practices at every call.

The relative strength of these informal changes varies with organizational “distance” from the event. Members who actually participated in a firefighter fatality incident may become safety advocates, or at least make permanent behavioral changes, while those not directly involved may experience only short-term changes. Some firefighters expressed concern that the incident provided a “30-day wake-up call”, after which most members went back to their old behavior. As the amount of time since the event increases, the institutional memory fades and the organization may begin to forget the safety-related lessons learned from the incident.

To help prevent the safety consciousness from “fading”, fire departments can build on the desire to take action by reinforcing the informal behavioral and cultural changes with training, SOPs, and the prompt preparation and dissemination of after-action reports. The actions of veteran firefighters who were directly involved with the incident can also have a great impact on other members by providing examples of safe habits whose importance hit home during their tragic experience.

## **Equipment**

A major emphasis on the adequacy and safety of equipment can be expected following a firefighter fatality incident. This includes both fire apparatus and firefighter personal protective equipment. Firefighter fatality incidents often result in changes or upgrades to firefighter personal protective equipment. In some cases changes were already under consideration or planned by the fire department, and the incident served to accelerate the speed of their implementation.

There may be a tendency by the media or others to focus on the absence or inadequacy of a particular item of equipment, or an equipment failure, as THE cause of the fatalities. Investigation and analysis of the incident usually reveals several factors (some equipment related, some not) acting in combination to produce the tragic results. It is rare that an equipment failure alone was the sole contributor to the fatalities. Therefore, it is important that fire departments and other reviewers objectively examine every angle of the incident to ensure that undue emphasis is not being placed on a single contributing factor at the expense of identifying others.

An example of this phenomenon was the experience of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Fire after their three-fatality house fire. The intense emphasis on the firefighters' self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) as a potential contributing factor in their deaths belied the fact that several other important problems occurred that contributed to the outcome of the incident. Despite pressure to attribute the cause solely to the firefighters' SCBA, the PBF and other reviewers identified several contributing operational factors needing correction.

In order to prevent the dissemination of inaccurate information, it may be necessary for fire department personnel to educate elected officials and media members on the components and operation of specific items of firefighter personal protective equipment, and their contribution to safety and fireground efficiency. After their tragic incidents, the fire departments in both Seattle and Memphis took steps to educate the media on the use of PASS devices. These measures were taken after a great deal of media attention was focused on PASS devices as THE technological answer to preventing firefighter fatalities. In most cases, the media members directing this attention did not understand what a PASS device is or how it functions.

A highly visible tragedy like a firefighter fatality incident may highlight equipment changes previously requested by the fire department that were not implemented due to budgetary constraints. In these cases, the money to purchase or upgrade firefighter personal protective equipment may become available rather quickly. Public memory and media attention often have short durations as other news can quickly take the spotlight from the firefighter fatalities. Despite the need to carefully consider all aspects of the incident before determining cause, fire departments should take advantage of the "media spotlight" to call attention to areas where deficiencies in equipment are known. It is



therefore important not to belittle the contribution of safety equipment, while also not letting the equipment or its absence be mistaken as the sole problem, when there may be several others.

Although the need for bunker-type firefighter protective clothing had been well established prior to the fire in a three-story residential building that fatally burned three firefighters, the City of New York Fire Department (FDNY) had not been able to provide this equipment for its approximately 12,000 firefighters due to budget limitations. In the aftermath of this tragedy, the city administration made the funds available for every FDNY firefighter to receive this protective clothing without additional delay.

## **Training**

The circumstances surrounding a firefighter fatality incident may identify real or perceived training deficiencies within a fire department. Changes to operational SOPs or guidelines resulting from the incident must also be accompanied by thorough training to ensure their proper implementation.

Although a firefighter fatality incident may highlight areas where previous training was inadequate or did not occur, a more common finding from such incidents is the need for renewed emphasis on training in basic firefighting skills and procedures. These skills are often taught during recruit training, but their importance may not be re-emphasized until after an incident with a negative outcome, or they simply may not be refreshed often enough.

The City of New York Fire Department (FDNY) instituted a “Back-to-Basics” training program designed to ensure that firefighters maintain proficiency in the most important aspects of fire suppression operations while they receive training in new areas. This training emphasizes the importance of basic procedures like the coordination of engine and truck company operations. Even with the large number of experienced firefighters in New York City, the value of this continued emphasis on basic firefighting procedures is readily apparent and accepted by most firefighters. The FDNY went a step further by assigning some of their best, most experienced officers to teach in this program and pass on their hard-won lessons of applying basic skills. This helped lend credibility and validity to the training.

Some fire departments also reported an increase in the intensity or urgency of training sessions after a fatality incident. This intensity can be capitalized on by providing drills or training evolutions that emphasize areas needing correction, or allow firefighters to successfully meet the challenges of simulated incidents. Successful training may help alleviate the operational tentativeness or uncertainty following a firefighter fatality incident, and may help firefighters cope emotionally by allowing them to demonstrate that they can still “do the job”.

The importance of training firefighters in building construction hazards has been identified as a need by many departments that have suffered a firefighter fatality incident. Although all Seattle Fire Department officers received training in building construction prior to the collapse that killed four firefighters during a fatal warehouse fire, the department provided building construction training to *all* firefighters after the tragic event.

Sometimes firefighters themselves recognize the need for additional training and take their own initiative. The Hilltop Hose Company of Natrona Heights (PA), a volunteer department, noted an increase in the number of members who signed up for the building construction classes offered at local fire schools, following their fatal incident.

In 1996, the Pittsburgh Bureau of Fire conducted a strategy and tactics course for all command officers at the rank of battalion chief and above. The information and exercises incorporated into the course are aimed at improving the ability of command officers to maintain communications and keep abreast of changing fireground situations. The success of this course has led to its being offered on an annual basis.

The Memphis Division of Fire Services uses videos extensively for training purposes. After the 1988 fire in a Hackensack, NJ auto dealership that resulted in the deaths of five firefighters, the Memphis department had all company officers view a tape of that fire to reinforce the value of accountability for their firefighters during fire suppression operations. After their own tragedy at the 1994 high-rise fire that claimed the lives of two firefighters, Memphis and *American Heat* cooperated to produce a nationally distributed video re-creation of the fire. This video helps ensure that the lessons learned during this fatal fire in a residential high-rise are disseminated throughout the fire service.

The Pittsburgh Bureau of Fire also collaborated with *American Heat* to produce videos detailing the circumstances of the house fire in which three firefighters were killed, the lessons learned from the incident, and the steps that were subsequently taken to prevent such an incident from happening again.

## **Morale and Productivity**

Individual fire department members will react differently and have different personal needs following a firefighter fatality incident. Some members need to take time off to grieve, while others cope by staying busy and getting back to their normal work routine. Among the firefighters interviewed here, some felt that mandatory time off is the only way to ensure the proper mental health of members, while others felt that staying busy was the best way to cope. Fire department managers need to pay close attention to their employees after a fatality and give them the flexibility to grieve and cope in their own way.

Several fire department members consulted for this report indicated that the “healing” process may be significantly different depending upon the incident and on whether the critically injured firefighters required extensive hospitalization. Some surviving firefighters felt that the emotional impacts were tougher, with longer-lasting impacts, after a long and painful hospital stay by their fallen comrades. This should be considered when determining the emotional fitness for duty of company members, as well as their long-term counseling needs. The families of the fallen firefighters may also need sustained support during a long-term hospitalization likely to result in a fatality.

By and large, firefighters are very resilient and able to “bounce back” from tragedy. Still, the coping process takes time and will vary with the individual. Some firefighters felt that a firefighter fatality incident challenges the perception of invulnerability developed by many firefighters; as a result, there is a tendency to slow down and more carefully consider situations before taking action.

Following the incident there may be some initial tentativeness displayed by incident commanders and firefighters alike, although this will usually subside after several incidents are handled in a “routine” manner. The firefighters interviewed for this report agreed that eliminating this tentativeness may take up to one year and possibly more depending on the

circumstances surrounding the incident. One firefighter related that his company members seemed “punch drunk” for almost one year after their tragic incident. Command officers in one city also reported that for several months after their incident they saw fires being fought in a defensive mode that normally would have been fought offensively. In this case, it took several successfully extinguished fires to help restore the confidence of firefighters and company officers. Training activities (including realistic firefighting scenarios) were also conducted by this fire department to help restore confidence and refresh basic skills.

Despite the tentativeness that may be displayed following the death of fellow firefighters in the line of duty, firefighters seem to retain the aggressive tendencies and “can do” attitude that characterizes the fire service in the United States. Even in fire departments that have experienced a firefighter fatality incident, a great deal of emphasis is still placed on the use of aggressive, interior firefighting tactics as the primary means through which to preserve lives and property. Fire department command officers and firefighters interviewed for this report indicate that tension often exists between incident commanders, whose goals primarily include safety and accountability for their personnel, and firefighters who want to aggressively perform interior operations. This tension is especially palpable in the wake of a firefighter fatality incident when emotions are running high, and the need for firefighters and officers alike to prove to themselves that they can successfully “do the job” is particularly important.

Within 24 hours after the house fire in Pittsburgh that claimed the lives of three firefighters, the same platoon responded to a four-alarm fire in the eastern portion of the city. Despite the strong emotions still evident from the previous day’s tragedy, the same firefighters stopped the fire cold on what many agreed was one of the best managed firegrounds in a long time. It seemed that the loss of their fellow firefighters had hardened the resolve of D-Platoon to perform their duties safely and aggressively.

Despite the fire department’s eventual “return to normalcy”, fire department personnel should remain alert for circumstances that may stimulate the re-surfacing of strong emotions. This may occur after an incident similar to that at which the fatalities occurred, or during legal proceedings concerning the fatal incident, or even after a seemingly unrelated incident.

Crisis intervention and counseling resources should be made available for members and their families to deal with a possible resurgence of the feelings triggered by the incident. The need for crisis intervention long after the fatal incident is not often thought about, although it is potentially as important to firefighters as the debriefing that commonly occurs during the immediate aftermath.

## **Incident Management**

Most of the fire departments studied for this report use a formalized Incident Management System (IMS) to manage emergency operations. The need for such a system is an accepted practice within the fire service and may be required by Federal law depending upon the nature of the incident (e.g., hazardous materials). Among the fire departments studied for this report there was a feeling that while an IMS is inherently valuable, it is too often seen as a panacea or scapegoat for all of the possible problems that can occur on the fireground.

A major concern raised by members of several departments was the potential for the incident commander to quickly become overwhelmed by fireground events and information, especially when things start to go wrong, even when an IMS is being used. This problem was thought to be related to the decrease in the number of on-duty command officers and the demise of the chief's driver/aide position in many departments, thus reducing the number of assistants available to help the incident commander early in the incident.

Many incidents, such as emergency medical calls or responses to activated fire alarms, are not usually directed by a command officer. If a command officer does respond to this type of incident, it is often for the purpose of observing company officers and firefighters (though that itself is important for evaluating performance and identifying areas where training is needed). However, for serious situations (including structure fires) or when an incident takes a turn for the worse, several command officers and support staff are needed immediately to properly implement the IMS.

Using company officers to perform command tasks or fill command positions in the IMS increases the risk for firefighters as their officers' attention is directed away from the tactical tasks at hand. Incidents requiring multiple command officers, by their

inherently serious nature, also require that company officers remain with their firefighters and give their full and undivided attention to safely performing tactical operations.

The Memphis Division of Fire Services has made an effort to increase command presence on the fire scene with the response of additional chief officers to working fires. For high-rise buildings, Memphis has also implemented the use of a battalion chief on the fire floor to directly supervise the operations of a Task Force consisting of 2 engines and 1 truck company. This helps to address unity-of-command and span-of-control issues by ensuring close supervision and accountability in a dangerous fire environment remote from the command post.

The Pittsburgh Bureau of Fire enhanced their command procedures by dispatching an additional battalion chief to all structure fires, whose primary responsibility is firefighter safety and supervision of the Safety Unit.

Technology may also help provide some relief for overburdened incident commanders. Following their fatal incident, the Seattle Fire Department installed a computer system in the on-duty chief's vehicle that quickly provides the incident commander with building information gathered during pre-fire planning. Prompt access to this information is vital for helping to make sound strategic and tactical decisions.

## **Personnel Accountability**

The increased fire service emphasis on personnel accountability in the past decade is at least partially based on incidents where firefighters were injured or died because it was not known where they were in the structure, or even that they were inside at all. If conditions should deteriorate, a personnel accountability system (PAS) helps ensure that firefighters are quickly located and rescued, if necessary<sup>2</sup>. The PAS also helps the incident commander maintain tactical control of the incident by visually representing the locations and assignments of firefighting teams. Many departments now have formal personnel accountability systems using “passports”, barcodes, or tags. It was agreed upon by those interviewed for this report that for a PAS to be effective it must be used routinely, and implemented immediately upon arrival of the first units at the fire scene.

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<sup>2</sup> As a side note, some people confuse PASS device with the acronym PAS (Personnel Accountability System).

During the warehouse fire in Seattle, a personnel accountability system was in operation, and the location and assignment of the members who died was known at the time of the floor collapse that trapped them. The PAS information was critical to the SFD for directing and maintaining control of the many firefighters on the scene during their heroic search and rescue efforts, and may well have helped prevent further injuries.

Although many fire departments have adopted some form of personnel accountability system, it is important that the system is routinely implemented and that all personnel are well-versed in its operation. The experience of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Fire during their fatal incident prompted them to reinforce the importance of using their existing PAS at every structure fire.

An effective PAS should be flexible enough to allow for implementation at a variety of incidents and should be adaptable to situations where personnel will be operating in locations remote from the command post. This flexibility will help ensure that the system enhances safety on the fireground without having a detrimental effect on critical missions by slowing up or reducing staffing for fire attack, ventilation, and the primary search for occupants. Additionally, a designated officer (other officers can also be assigned to maintain accountability at remote entry points) should be assigned to supervise the PAS during the incident. It is important that the Incident Commander and operational Sector/Group/Division Officers are allowed to develop strategy, manage resources, and focus their attention on the fire situation, without having the additional burden of managing the PAS.

## **IMPACTS ON OTHER AREAS**

The aftermath of a firefighter fatality incident usually impacts the fire department in a variety of areas besides those pertaining to operations. The scope of these impacts will vary with each incident and department. This section describes other areas of impact identified by the six fire departments whose post-fatality experience was analyzed.

### **Recruitment and Retention**

There was no hard data available on how these multiple firefighter-fatality incidents affected the recruitment and retention of firefighters. Several departments felt that their fatal incidents caused them to prematurely lose some members who were eligible to retire, although no specific data were kept on whether the retirements occurred directly as a result of the incident. The retirement of command officers who participated in a firefighter fatality incident was noted in several cases.

Firefighters tended to bond together very closely after the loss of their comrades as the everyday problems associated with firehouse life were quickly forgotten. Even though some members may have initially felt like leaving the department or company, they stayed to provide support to the other members of their fire department “family”. Some fire department members interviewed therefore felt that this type of incident may even have had an overall positive effect on member recruitment and retention. The limited evidence suggests no large effect either way.

The volunteers in Milford and Brackenridge reported that they had above-average turnouts for calls occurring for several months after their tragedies. A fire that occurred in Milford, MI during the same week as their tragic incident drew a 100% turnout of volunteer members. Both departments also experienced minimal changes in the number of volunteer applications following the incidents.



## **After-Action Reporting**

All six of the fire departments considered after-action reporting an extremely valuable and essential tool for dealing with the aftermath of a firefighter fatality incident. A thorough, objective, and timely review of the entire incident can help prevent recurrence by identifying and correcting problems. This also can aid the grieving process by enabling members of the department to understand the incident as it happened, and by helping ensure that surviving firefighters, who may not have been directly involved in the tragedy, have the opportunity to learn from the events.

After-action reports can also be useful for dealing with the media and representatives of other agencies. By presenting the Board of Inquiry's after-action report to the media after their fatal high-rise fire, the Memphis Division of Fire Services was able to provide reporters with complete and accurate information on which to base their reports. The presentation itself, held at the fire department headquarters and attended by members of the Division's Senior Staff, gave reporters the opportunity to ask questions and clarify issues before writing their stories.

Some departments have experienced internal morale problems when comprehensive reports have not been issued promptly. The timely completion and dissemination of report findings demonstrates the fire department's willingness to identify and correct problems, and also helps satisfy the surviving firefighters' intense need to understand what happened to their comrades. In fact, the early release of factual information, even before the completion of a formal after-action report, was considered very helpful by firefighters for understanding how the incident "went down".

Although it is important to conduct a thorough investigation and complete review of the incident, after-action reporting should be approached from the perspective of identifying problems or "lessons learned", without placing blame or dishonoring the memory of those who died. Firefighters are generally willing to learn from past mistakes provided that the lessons are presented in a manner that does not single out a particular individual or company for criticism. To ensure the cooperation of those involved in the incident, it must be clearly understood that the purpose of the reporting process is not to assess blame or take disciplinary action on individuals, but to identify areas where

problems occurred and detail any lessons learned to prevent future tragedies. This is not to denigrate holding people accountable for their actions, but is meant to avoid mistaken accusations or scapegoating based on the clarity of hindsight.

Fire department managers and firefighters alike also felt that after-action reports should be written not just for incidents with negative outcomes, but also for incidents where everything went smoothly. The City of New York Fire Department has expanded its program of conducting incident critiques to include “routine” incidents, with the aim of reinforcing the value of good operating practices.

Fire department personnel interviewed during this study considered outside incident reviewers important assets that lend credibility to after-action reports and help ensure their objectivity; reports that are produced entirely “in-house” may not benefit from the collective experience of the fire service as a whole. The use of outside resources also helps ensure that the incident is examined from different points of view. Some of the organizations producing after-action reports for the incidents summarized here included the United States Fire Administration, the National Fire Protection Association, and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

## **Investigations**

The occurrence of a firefighter fatality incident will place into motion a variety of investigations conducted both internally and from outside the fire department. These investigations may be separate from the after-action reporting process, and range from the routine cause and origin investigations conducted by fire department personnel for all fires, to arson or homicide investigations conducted by local, state, and federal agencies.

Proper handling of the investigation proceedings is a vital part of effectively dealing with the aftermath of the incident. The close scrutiny that can be expected following such a tragedy leaves little margin for error, making it critical that established guidelines and procedures are followed to the letter. It is also important that the investigative efforts are comprehensive in nature, with equal attention paid to examining the events leading up to the critical moment, as well as subsequent events. Performing such an investigation may be difficult for local resources to handle alone. Fire and police

departments tasked with conducting these investigations can make the job easier by enlisting the cooperation of outside resources and agencies.

Fire departments should also be prepared to cooperate with other agencies who, while they may have different mandates, are essentially seeking the same types of information. Agencies that can be expected to become involved with the aftermath of a firefighter fatality incident include the local and state police; the state fire marshal; state and federal occupational safety and health agencies (OSHA or equivalent); the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH); the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF); the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); and the United States Fire Administration (USFA).

These agencies have specialized resources and may be able to assist the fire department with its own investigation. Coordination and cooperation with these agencies is facilitated when the fire department has and follows written procedures for dealing with a line-of-duty death investigation. Adherence to these procedures is also important for ensuring that the families of fallen firefighters receive the proper benefits in a timely manner.

The first step in any firefighter fatality investigation is the fire department's responsibility to secure the fire scene and preserve the evidentiary chain of custody until law enforcement personnel arrive. This is vitally important and any scene where a firefighter fatality has occurred should be treated as a crime scene. Publications that can assist fire departments in conducting line-of-duty death investigations include: *Line-of-Duty Death Investigation Procedures* (available from the International Association of Fire Chiefs), and the USFA's *Firefighter Autopsy Protocol* (autopsies are required to obtain federal death benefits for public safety officers). Sample investigative procedures from fire departments that have experienced a firefighter fatality incident are included in the appendix.

## **PREPARING FOR THE AFTERMATH**

It is impossible to emotionally prepare for the aftermath of a firefighter fatality incident. Nonetheless, fire departments can mitigate the impact by having policies and procedures in place to deal with the multitude of concerns following such an incident, including: investigation procedures, funeral protocols, counseling resources, and others. It is vital that these procedures are already in place to help ensure that the, “right things get done right”, in the limited amount of time between the incident and the funerals. All of the departments studied for this report emphasized the importance of having written guidelines to help handle the complexities of the arrangements required after such an incident. Even with these procedures in place, it is possible for the fire department to be overwhelmed by the concerns stemming from the incident.

The aftermath of every firefighter fatality incident will present unique concerns related to the individual department’s characteristics, the specific circumstances of the incident, and the personalities of those involved. Nonetheless, many of the concerns affecting fire departments after such an incident are not unique, and have been handled by other fire departments forced to deal with them. In an attempt to help fire departments develop appropriate procedures and in order to give some idea of what to expect following a firefighter fatality incident, this section will identify some common concerns and give recommendations for managing them, based on the experiences of the six departments that participated in this review.

### **Guidance for Dealing with Firefighter-Fatalities**

It is common for fire departments and firefighters to feel overwhelmed after a firefighter fatality incident. Other members of the fire service represent an extremely valuable resource at that time, especially those with first-hand experience in coping with the aftermath of firefighter fatalities. Firefighters and chief officers from other jurisdictions will usually offer a great deal of assistance, often without being asked. The annual *Firefighter Fatality Analysis Project and Report* published by the United States Fire Administration lists the fire departments that experienced fatalities during the previous year. Fire departments can use this report to identify departments nearby, or

ones with which they have contacts, who can offer guidance on what to expect and how to cope.

In the aftermath of the house fire that resulted in the deaths of three firefighters, Chief Charlie Dickinson of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Fire received a call from Director Charles Smith in Memphis. Chief Dickinson found this call extremely helpful, as Director Smith was able to give him first-hand knowledge on what to expect, how to cope with the tragedy, and provide advice on how to establish a Board of Inquiry to begin the after-action reporting process. Chiefs, as well as firefighters, need help in dealing with the tragedy as they are often a focal point during the aftermath.

Members of the New York City Fire Department have developed several guidance mechanisms for dealing with the aftermath of firefighter fatality incidents. In order to prevent the knowledge gained from dealing with the aftermath of previous incidents from being lost, an informal document known as “The Book” was created by the members of several companies that had experienced firefighter fatality incidents. “The Book” contains specific and detailed information on funeral procedures, family assistance, organizing memorial ceremonies, and funding. “The Book” is kept by the company that last needed it, and their experience is added to the document. When another fatality occurs, firefighters from this company take “The Book” to the company whose members died, and counsel them on its contents and what to expect during the aftermath. This guidance is critical for helping members deal with their tragedy. The possibility of formalizing “The Book” is now being considered by the Department.

## **Media Relations**

The high visibility of a firefighter fatality incident will generate heavy media coverage of the fire department, firefighters, and their families. Dealing with such intense coverage is difficult, but can be made easier through the use of existing media relationships. A positive working relationship with the media may help prevent or lessen rumors, speculation, and sensationalism from dominating the coverage.

It is important during the aftermath of the incident that the fire department understand the role of the media, and provide them with accurate, timely information. Although there may be tremendous pressure to provide the media with explanations or “educated guesses”, only factual information should be presented.

The designated source, who is often but not necessarily the department’s Public Information Officer (PIO), will be responsible for fielding inquiries, preparing statements, and presenting information during interviews or press conferences. Dealing with the media after a firefighter fatality incident is a challenging assignment. The person responsible may need assistance from other department members. As a result of their experience, the Seattle Fire Department trained and appointed several “Backup PIOs”, as the media onslaught was too much for one person to handle.

Efforts should be made to protect family and fire department members from intrusive media coverage. Allowing unrestricted access to these people may hinder their grieving process and cause emotional harm. The best method of ensuring respect for their privacy is to consistently provide accurate, timely information to the media through a designated source.

After the incident in Brackenridge, PA, the Hilltop Hose Company of Natrona Heights (PA) experienced a media deluge that was especially difficult for a volunteer department to handle. By channeling all media requests for information through a designated Public Information Officer, providing interviews with the Chief and President, and denying access to the firehouse, the members of Hilltop Hose were able to effectively deal with the media during the aftermath of their tragic incident, and maintain privacy for members and their families.

When two firefighters were killed in a high-rise fire in Memphis, the Memphis Division of Fire Services issued an immediate statement to members of the media. This statement gave a brief description of the incident and the steps that were being taken to gather more information, including the establishment of a Board of Inquiry. When the Board of Inquiry finished their review of the incident, media representatives were invited to fire department headquarters for a comprehensive briefing on the Board’s findings. This approach proved very effective.

## Legal Issues

There are a variety of legal issues that may arise following a firefighter fatality incident. These can range from criminal investigations of arson or homicide to civil proceedings against a fire department by surviving family members. Many people have a tendency to want someone to blame for the incident, someone to “pay” for what happened. The potential for monetary compensation is also a factor in civil suits.

Fire departments should be prepared to participate in a variety of legal proceedings. Some fire departments retain their own legal counsel, while others utilize the services of an attorney provided by the municipal government. When the Hilltop Hose Company of Natrona Heights (PA) needed legal advice during the aftermath of their incident, a local attorney provided legal counsel on a pro bono basis. Fire departments can help prepare for this eventuality by establishing a relationship with an attorney prior to needing their services.

The importance of documentation after a firefighter fatality incident cannot be overstated. Fire departments should use established investigative and chain-of-custody procedures to minimize legal complications. Assistance from outside agencies, like the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) that specialize in fire and arson investigation is invaluable for ensuring that documentation and investigative efforts are comprehensive. Events should be logged and recorded in detail. Phone calls and offers of assistance should also be logged if possible. Accurate, extensive documentation will help the fire department avoid potentially negative legal outcomes. Procedures and protocols for ensuring effective documentation can be prepared in advance and should designate who is responsible for each aspect of the documentation effort. Staff or clerical personnel from the fire department or another agency could be assigned to handle incoming calls at the affected fire station(s), which would help alleviate the stress on surviving firefighters, as well as ensure that trained personnel with good notetaking and telephone skills are fully utilized. Fire department photo units or “fire buff” associations could be enlisted to help create photographic or videotaped records of important events.

Legal proceedings can have both a positive and negative effect on the healing process for department members. The trial and sentencing of an arsonist found guilty of setting a fire that resulted in a firefighter fatality incident may help provide closure to the

incident. On the other hand, complicated legal maneuverings, coupled with the need for potential witnesses (firefighters involved in the incident) to remain cautious about revealing their feelings, may hamper the healing process and heighten the negative impacts on the fire department. Criminal investigations may prevent the fire department from being completely open about the circumstances surrounding the incident, which can create an atmosphere of conflict and suspicion with the media, union representatives, and department members.

The experience of the Seattle Fire Department during the extradition of the suspected arsonist in the 1995 warehouse fire that killed four firefighters illustrates that long, complicated legal proceedings may have an extremely detrimental effect on the fire department following a firefighter fatality incident. Many members of the department feel that the need, identified soon after the incident, to prevent information from leaking that might jeopardize the criminal investigation, negatively impacted firefighters' ability to cope with the loss of their comrades. The lack of closure to the incident ensured continued media coverage (local and national) and scrutiny from other government agencies. These factors, combined with the legal maneuverings involved in bringing the suspect to trial, created an extremely difficult situation for members of the SFD and their families. The trial of the suspect on arson charges, which at the time of this report had still not taken place, is expected to re-open many emotional wounds.

When helping members involved in firefighter fatality incidents resulting from arson fires, the Counseling Unit of the City of New York Fire Department has found that firefighters may be reluctant to "open up" during counseling sessions due to pressure placed on them as potential witnesses in criminal investigations. For this reason, counselors try to focus on sights, sounds, and feelings without going into incident specifics.

## **Financial**

The financial consequences of a firefighter fatality incident can be extremely significant. Understandably, few fire departments have budgeted funds for expenses related to firefighter fatalities. A firefighter line-of-duty death, especially a multiple firefighter-fatality incident, can place a heavy financial burden on a fire department, firefighters, and on the families of fallen firefighters.



There are many areas of financial concern that commonly arise following a firefighter fatality incident. These concerns may be further complicated by the sudden nature of the event, the short time frame between the event and the funeral(s), the differing needs of family members, and the intense emotion prevalent throughout the aftermath of the incident. The financial costs of the incident may be direct, including the replacement costs for lost or damaged portable equipment/apparatus; sick leave and overtime costs; funeral expenses (typically several thousand dollars/person); cost of the reception and memorial services; cost of providing food, toilet facilities, etc. to visiting firefighters at the funeral or reception; or indirect, such as the cost of providing for the needs of the fallen firefighters' family members (groceries, transportation, etc.). Fire departments that have experienced firefighter fatalities have developed some mechanisms for addressing these concerns.

Members of the City of New York Fire Department (FDNY) regularly contribute to a "Death Fund" that is administered by a designated company in each Division. The primary goal of this fund is to quickly provide money for supporting the families of fallen firefighters. Without this fund, it would be difficult to collect and distribute donations quickly enough to provide for the immediate needs of family members. Although the needs of the family members are paramount, these funds can also be used to help pay for memorial services, although the expense of these events can quickly outstrip available funds. One fire company interviewed for this report has still not recouped their personal expenses for putting on a memorial service.

In fire departments with career staff, organized labor units may provide financial and other types of support to their members and the families of the fallen firefighters. This support may be substantial and can originate locally, or from a national organization such as the International Association of Fire Fighters. Some fire departments also have "relief" organizations or associations that regularly collect contributions to help members during times of crisis. These organizations may hold fund drives or participate in charitable campaigns sponsored by groups such as the United Way.

Some communities have service organizations that exist to provide support to community members following various types of crises. These organizations may offer support to fire departments after a firefighter fatality incident. An example is the "100

Club” in Memphis, a group of 100 anonymous business and civic leaders who provided financial assistance to the families of the fallen firefighters in Memphis.

For the families of fallen firefighters, the complex documentation required for claiming death benefits and for dealing with the financial aftermath of the incident may prove especially burdensome. Several of the fire departments recommended assigning a fire department representative to each family as both a liaison and resource for the family. The job of this representative is take care of the deceased member’s family’s immediate needs and to help them navigate through the many details of the funeral preparations, memorial services, insurance claims, etc. Some departments and labor unions have set up family assistance teams to provide 24-hour support to the family for transportation, groceries, and incidentals.

Other financial concerns may be addressed through the creation of charitable or memorial funds in the names of the fallen firefighters or their families. These funds may be set up to receive donations from the community for purposes such as providing education for the children of the fallen firefighters, or creating a memorial in the firefighters’ honor. The special concerns related to handling donations are discussed in the next section.

## **Donations**

Fire departments can expect to receive numerous donations from both civilians and organizations after a firefighter fatality incident. The sheer volume of requests to help and the number of donations can become overwhelming. However, there are some things that should be considered to help properly manage donations and prevent complications from developing.

Monetary donations must be properly accounted for and deposited in bank accounts separate from those used for other purposes. An individual should be designated to handle monetary donations, to help ensure proper accountability for the funds. Donors should be specific about the intended purpose of their donation, for example, to provide for the needs of the family or to help defray the costs of the funeral and memorial service. Funds should be equitably distributed, with input from family members, to help prevent conflicts.

Some thought should be given to the process for handling donations prior to the incidence of a firefighter fatality incident. Often, the treasurer or person responsible for station funds will become responsible for handling donations, since they usually deal with station finances, and may be bonded or have essential skills like bookkeeping experience. However, handling the number of donations received can be difficult under the best of circumstances, and it should be remembered that these individuals also need time to grieve and cope emotionally. It may be helpful, under these circumstances, to arrange for assistance from another government agency or a private accounting firm. To help ensure that donations are properly earmarked by donors, a mechanism of coordination should be set up among each fallen firefighters' family (or their representative), the fire department, and the media representative or PIO. This will enable the family members' needs and desires to be determined, specified, and publicized to potential donors. Separate accounts should be set up for each family, child, or purpose (e.g., memorial construction).

Non-monetary donations can take many forms, from citizens bringing food or flowers, to loans of fire apparatus and personnel from other departments to provide coverage for a neighboring fire department. (Mutual aid agreements might include provisions for such coverage.) Donations received in the form of goods or services (food, personnel, portable equipment, protective clothing, etc.) should be properly documented, accounted for, and appropriately acknowledged.

Several study participants related that while most donations come from individuals or organizations that are just "happy to help", in some cases donors may expect something from the fire department in return; for example, publicity or a photo opportunity. Fire department members should be aware of this possibility to ensure that only donations with no strings attached are accepted.

All of the fire departments consulted for this report stated that the number of donations and offers of assistance exceeded their expectations. Despite the necessity of taking the precautions noted above, this outpouring of support was found very helpful for coping with the aftermath of a firefighter fatality incident.

## **Crisis Management/Counseling**

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) and long-term counseling are critical to helping fire departments and firefighters deal with the many stresses encountered after a firefighter fatality incident. These services should also be made available to department members' families and the families of the fallen firefighters.

The fire departments studied here found that initial debriefings and long-term counseling for members needing additional assistance were vital for safely returning members to active duty. Failure to provide emotional and psychological support may result in the resurgence of emotions during stressful situations, which may have a detrimental impact on safe operations. Considering the power of the emotions involved with a firefighter fatality, it is important that trained professionals be used to provide these services. Firefighters felt that better results were obtained if the counselors were members of the emergency service community.

Fire department chaplains are another important resource for both firefighters and family members. Chaplains can provide on-scene emotional support to firefighters during rescue or recovery efforts; they can also provide support to critically injured firefighters and their families. While not all fire departments have chaplains, arrangements to provide clergy members during crises should be considered as part of the planning process.

The benefits of CISD are widely accepted throughout the fire service, but the importance of long-term counseling for firefighters and others affected by tragic incidents is less often considered. Surviving firefighters may initially become caught up in immediate concerns like funerals, memorials, and helping the families of their fallen comrades; they may not begin to react emotionally until long after the incident.

Several fire department members felt that memorial services like the annual National Fallen Firefighters' Memorial Service in Emmitsburg, MD, are helpful to both firefighters and families for providing a sense of closure, enabling sharing between survivors and families who have suffered such tragedies, and by honoring the fallen firefighters.

There is a significant amount of recent literature on crisis management and stress debriefing. This report makes no attempt to detail a methodology for providing this vital service. More information on this topic can be found in fire-rescue service trade

magazines or by contacting the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation in Ellicott City, Maryland.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following is a consensus of recommendations for dealing with the aftermath of a firefighter fatality incident, made by fire department managers, union representatives, medical personnel, and the firefighters who participated in this study. Although their applicability depends upon individual department characteristics, these recommendations were found helpful to all of the fire departments and firefighters studied for this report.

- 1.) Give members the opportunity to grieve.*** Although the issue of mandatory versus optional time off for members following a firefighter fatality incident was the subject of some debate, fire department managers should ensure that firefighters are given the time they need to deal with their emotional stress. This is imperative to maintain operational safety and productivity.
- 2.) Be alert for signs of emotional stressors throughout the fire department after the incident.*** The emotional trauma resulting from a firefighter fatality incident can affect members in any area of the organization. The fallen firefighters often are known by many people in the department during their careers. Even those who didn't know them may be affected. Supervisors must look for signs of emotional difficulty not only in those directly affected by the incident, but in every area, at every organizational level.
- 3.) Provide trained crisis management support and long-term counseling for members and their families.*** Although not all fire department members will need to take advantage of this support, making the service available is crucial to ensuring the emotional health and recuperation of department members and their families.
- 4.) Use written guidelines, established beforehand, to handle investigations, funerals, and media relations.*** By preparing in advance for a firefighter fatality incident, fire departments will ensure that they are able to handle at least some of the myriad items that must be dealt with after such a devastating event. The use of established guidelines will also help in the event of legal proceedings related to the incident.

**5.) *Be prepared to participate in a variety of legal proceedings.*** Documentation is critical to ensure that fire departments are prepared for a variety of legal issues that may arise following a firefighter fatality incident.

**6.) *Prepare timely, thorough, and objective after-action reports.*** These reports will help satisfy the department's need to ensure that any problems have been identified and addressed; they are also helpful for disseminating lessons learned with the goal of changing behavior to prevent future tragedies. Several fire departments found the prompt formation of a Board of Inquiry or other investigative body very helpful for ensuring the success of the after-action reporting process. Outside reviewers can be helpful by lending credibility, technical support, and different points of view to the process.

**7.) *Give thought to financial preparation for dealing with the aftermath of a firefighter fatality incident.*** A contingency fund for dealing with the financial concerns after a tragic incident is important for helping family and fellow company members deal with the loss of their loved ones. The financial impacts of such an incident are not trivial and can be quite costly. Firefighters can help reduce the potential burden on their families by ensuring that financial arrangements (e.g., wills, insurance policies, and beneficiaries) are periodically reviewed and kept current.

**8.) *Develop and maintain good working relationships with the media.*** Established media relationships and a mutual understanding of each others' needs and concerns can help ensure positive, accurate, and respectful media coverage.

**9.) *Establish lines of communication within the fire department to ensure that members can be given timely, accurate incident information.*** It is important for fire department managers to quickly disseminate information about the incident to members. Additionally, members must know that the incident is being thoroughly studied in order to identify any problems that could lead to other tragedies.

**10.) *Establish Firefighter Fatality Assistance Task Forces.*** Many of those interviewed for this report felt that, although a firefighter fatality incident is an extremely sad and difficult event for a fire department, one of the positive things to arise from it is the great outpouring of support from the community and other members of the fire service.

Assistance from other members of the fire service community was found to be especially helpful.

As a means of formalizing and extending this support to fire departments in their time of need, several study participants suggested that a national task force be formed to respond to fire departments suffering a line-of-duty death incident. This task force would provide guidance and technical assistance to the fire department during the difficult time after the incident. A region or county might consider establishing a more locally organized task force.

***11.) Eliminate the causes of firefighter fatality incidents.*** Despite the best efforts of many in the fire service to widely disseminate the lessons learned from firefighter fatalities, such incidents continue to occur. Further attention must be directed toward changing procedures and behaviors which are proven killers. Reducing the fire problem through prevention and public education is another fundamental way to reduce firefighter deaths and injuries.

## **APPENDIX A**

**Pittsburgh Bureau of Fire SOP 70.0** – *Investigative Procedures Involving Line of Duty Deaths*





**PITTSBURGH BUREAU OF FIRE  
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**



**SOP 70.0 INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES INVOLVING LINE OF  
DUTY DEATHS**

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**70.0 INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES INVOLVING LINE OF DUTY DEATHS**

- 70.1 Scope
- 70.2 Purpose
- 70.3 Emergency Scene
- 70.4 Fire Incident
- 70.5 Board of Inquiry
- 70.6 News Media Information
- 70.7 Other Agencies
- 70.8 Support Service for Board of Inquiry

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**PITTSBURGH BUREAU OF FIRE  
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**



**SOP 70.0 INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES INVOLVING LINE OF  
DUTY DEATHS**

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**70.0. INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES INVOLVING LINE OF DUTY DEATHS**

**70.1. SCOPE**

This Standard Operating Procedure is established to enable a comprehensive and accurate internal investigation to be conducted under what will be stressful circumstances.

**70.2. PURPOSE**

It is the intent of this document to provide clear mandatory guidelines for the establishment of a Fire Chief's Board of Inquiry and certain criteria that will need to be accomplished.

**70.3. EMERGENCY SCENE**

Immediately secure scene and restrict access to only those who have absolute need to enter/work in area.

**70.4. FIRE INCIDENT**

Immediately secure scene and treat as a crime scene until fire cause is determined by Fire Investigators and the Board of Inquiry has completed their on-scene investigation.

- Keep control of scene/building until all investigation needs are completed
- Establish liaison with Police Bureau for around the clock scene security
- Assign EOC Mobil Command Post at the scene for investigators logistical support
- Notify County Fire Marshal and ATF of incident and request support
- Notify City Photo Lab and Cable Bureau Units of request for photo/video support
- Secure and impound all related and/or involved equipment--treat/handle as evidence using chain of custody practices
- Request that the Department of Engineering and Construction staff provide to scale drawing of building if existing plans are not available

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PITTSBURGH BUREAU OF FIRE  
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES



SOP 70.0 INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES INVOLVING LINE OF  
DUTY DEATHS

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- Establish Fire Station as an interview and CISD Debriefing Site
  1. Assign Chief Officer Coordinator
  2. Mobilize Office Staff personnel
  3. Take written statements of all Officer/Firefighters prior to releasing from duty who were involved in the incident. These statements are to be confidential and forwarded to the Board of Inquiry
  4. Provide CISD debriefing

#### 70.5. BOARD OF INQUIRY

The Fire Chief shall appoint a Board of Inquiry to investigate the incident, outline the Bureau's objectives of the investigation and appoint a chairperson. This Board shall be established within 24 hours of the incident. Remove Board members from regular duty.

The Board's general duties shall include

- On site familiarization of the incident scene and actions that occurred
- Ensure all necessary photos and video documentation is completed
- Review written statements
- Coordinate any necessary equipment testing with outside agencies (SCBA, Protective clothing, PASS Devices, radios, etc.
- Prepare written Press Release for news media, Fire Chief, Union President and Board of Inquiry Chairman Release jointly at the same news conference
- Interview all involved Officers/Firefighters
- Review chronological dispatch reports
- View all personnel protective equipment (including SCBA)
- Coordinate Engineering staff to scale drawings of structure involved
- Construct from Communications chronology a time line sequence of events chart
- Reconstruct scene from statements (interviews/diagrams/designs)
- Write report
- Have Law Department review final draft
- Submit report including Lessons Learned and Recommendations from Board
- Review report with effected families and involved Fire personnel prior to making report public

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**PITTSBURGH BUREAU OF FIRE  
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES**



**SOP 70.0 INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES INVOLVING LINE OF  
DUTY DEATHS**

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**70.6. NEWS MEDIA/INFORMATION**

- Provide constant updated information as to the status of the Board of Inquiry's work
- Dispel rumors quickly through instant correct information
- Issue summary of what occurred using known facts only for an early Press Release (news media will be voracious)
- Be prepared for constant news media inquiry
- Personally brief and update effected family(s)
- Schedule Press Conference and provide through the Board of Inquiry as many facts as known. **DO NOT GUESS!**

**70.7. OTHER AGENCIES**

- Make arrangements for representatives of the U.S. Fire Administration, NFPA, IAFC, LAFF, and NIOSH where required
- Discuss with the Coroner's Office particular needs of an autopsy
- Ensure scheduling and dedicated space is provided for CISD support

**70.8. SUPPORT SERVICE FOR BOARD OF INQUIRY**

- Consider each rank in the Suppression Division to be represented as well as the Training Academy. The Board should include Union representation. Keep the group small and keep in mind group dynamics.
- Have a coordinator assigned from the Mayor's Office. This person should have the authority and knowledge to cut through the red tape and bureaucracy. They should facilitate contacts with other city departments.
- Provide a qualified computer operator and PC with accompanying software that is compatible with Administrative Office computers, to be assigned to the Board full-time.
- Comfortable, isolated offices equipped with telephones, television, tape recorders, cameras and video equipment should be provided, as well as vehicles.
- Guidance in interviewing techniques and handling of those Firefighters involved in the incident should be provided.
- A standard set of questions and guidelines should be developed and employed to ensure that the information obtained is thorough and consistent.

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**EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 25, 1995**

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PITTSBURGH BUREAU OF FIRE  
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES



SOP 70.0 INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES INVOLVING LINE OF  
DUTY DEATHS

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- Fully utilize all resources available, public and private. Examples of such resources would be NIOSH, National Fire Administration, IAFF, Center for disease control, etc., private agencies such as Universities, Hospital research personnel and independent testing facilities.
- The City Administration, Fire Chief and Union should agree not to attempt to influence or intimidate the Board.
- No statements should be made by the above until the Board delivers its report.

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EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 25, 1995

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## **APPENDIX B**

**Memphis Division of Fire Services** – *Funeral Protocols and Death Notification*

DIVISION OF FIRE SERVICES  
FUNERAL PROTOCOLS

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**FUNERAL PROTOCOLS AND DEATH NOTIFICATION**

The following death notification and protocol procedures will be in effect from this date forward and will be adhered to unless unusual circumstances prohibit. It is crucial that no employee contact the family of a critically injured or deceased employee prior to proper notification by specific, identified, staff personnel. The Director of Fire Services or OSHA staff will coordinate notification and transportation of the immediate family through the Fire Communications Bureau.

**Notification Of Death**

The Fire Communications Bureau (FCB) should be immediately notified in the event of death or serious injury. Strict adherence to the following notification order and/or procedures is mandatory.

The FCB will notify the following:

- A. Director of Fire Services
- B. Deputy Director of Fire Services
- C. OSHA Coordinator
- D. Chief of Emergency Operations
- E. Emergency Unit Supervisor (If on-duty death)
- F. Mayor (after conversation with Director if an on-duty death)
- G. No vocalarm announcements of the death will be made until complete family notification has been assured.
- H. Information will not be released to the news media until authorized by the Director or his designee.

The OSHA office staff will advise the Fire Communications Bureau when to notify the Fire Division chaplain as well as to the appropriate location for reporting.

The following describes the various types of deaths and/or funeral procedures to be adhered to by all members of the Division of Fire Services:

DIVISION OF FIRE SERVICES  
FUNERAL PROTOCOLS

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Death Notification And Funeral Protocol  
Continued

**Class I Death / Funeral  
Full Line Of Duty (Trauma Induced)**

A Class I funeral is provided for members who are killed (trauma) at the scene of an emergency incident or who is killed responding to or coming from the scene of an emergency incident.

This funeral service will also be provided for members who are injured at the scene of a fire or an emergency and who later die as a result of the injuries. There may be other deaths that, due to particular circumstances, could be classified as being "Full Line of Duty Death" by the Director of Fire Services.

This type (Class I) funeral service will not be provided for employees who die of heart, lung, or hypertension related causes but are not engaged in firefighting or emergency activities at the time of death. The Class I funeral service is reserved for employees who die from injuries sustained at the scene of emergency incidents.

Upon notification that there has been a Line Of Duty death, the following will be initiated:

1. The Fire Communication Bureau (FCB) will notify all companies by vocal alarm of the funeral arrangements, as they are completed. The proper uniform of the day of services will also be announced.
2. All worksite flags will be flown at half mast from notification of the death until the following day after the funeral services.
3. The Engine House / work site location of the deceased employee as well as all stations located in the funeral procession route will be draped in black.
4. All Division of Fire Services personnel should wear the Class A uniform to the funeral, and sit in the section of the church / funeral home provided or reserved for them. Black tape should be worn over badges from notification of the death until the following day after the funeral services.



DIVISION OF FIRE SERVICES  
FUNERAL PROTOCOLS

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Death Notification And Funeral Protocol  
Continued

Class I Death / Funeral  
Full Line Of Duty (Trauma Induced) - continued

5. Upon entry or exit of the casket from the church or funeral home, all uniformed employees will form a pathway from the hearse to the chapel when the body is placed or removed for services and/or burial. As the casket approaches the fire employees, the command of "FIRE DIVISION, ATTENTION" will be given. At the command of "PRESENT ARMS", all uniformed fire personnel will salute (with hats on). Any personnel not in uniform will place their hand over their heart. After the casket has passed, the command of "ORDER ARMS" will be given and the salute dropped. After the salute is dropped, all fire personnel will proceed into the chapel / funeral home and sit in the designated area for the funeral services.
6. After services are completed, all fire personnel will move out of the chapel / funeral home (before civilians) and form the pathway once again for the casket to be put in the hearse.
7. When the hearse arrives at the cemetery, all civilians will be held back until the uniformed personnel form the pathway to the final resting place. The salute will be repeated at this location.

DIVISION OF FIRE SERVICES  
FUNERAL PROTOCOLS

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Death Notification And Funeral Protocol  
Continued

Class I Death / Funeral  
Full Line Of Duty (Trauma Induced) - continued

In accordance with the family's desires, the Fire Division will make the following arrangements. It is important to note that **FAMILY WISHES** dictate the Fire Division's involvement in all funeral arrangements. These arrangements are coordinated by the Division of Fire Services OSHA staff, appointed assistants, and Funeral Home Directors only. An authorized representative of the Division of Fire Services will coordinate the following with the family.

- A. Transportation to the funeral home to make funeral arrangements.
- B. Transportation to and from services on the day of the funeral.
- C. Arrangement for Pall-Bearers in Class "A" uniform with white gloves.
- D. Arrangement for the Honor Guard to stand vigilance at the head and foot of the casket from the time the body is ready for viewing until the funeral services begin. The class "A" uniform, with white gloves, will be worn by the honor guard.
- E. Arrangement for Color Guard in Class "A" Uniform with white gloves.
- F. Arrangement for American flag for casket.
- G. Arrangement for first line fire equipment (Engine, Truck, Emergency Unit) to precede the hearse in the funeral procession if the body is not carried on the equipment itself.
- H. Arrangement to have the appropriate number of Division red cars, with lights flashing, to be in the funeral procession to the cemetery. These cars will immediately follow the family car in the funeral procession.
- I. Provide motorized escort from funeral services to the burial site.
- J. Arrange for "Taps", Bagpipes, and 21 gun salute at the cemetery. (If desired by the family).
- K. Full assistance provided to the family in processing widow or survivor's benefits.

DIVISION OF FIRE SERVICES  
FUNERAL PROTOCOLS

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Death Notification And Funeral Protocol  
Continued

**Class II Death / Funeral  
On Duty But Not Trauma Induced**

A Class II death pertains to personnel who have died while on duty, but not due to trauma or injuries sustained while in the performance of emergency response activities.

1. The Fire Communications Bureau (FCB) will notify the proper Division personnel as outlined in the notification list.
2. Announcements will be made over the vocal alarm system to all companies that the death has occurred and include any funeral arrangement known at that time.
3. All flags will be flown at half mast from notification of death until the day following the funeral services within the Division of Fire Services. Black tape may be worn over badges from date of notification until the day following the funeral services.
4. The Engine House / worksite of the deceased employee will be draped in black.
5. Honor Guard, Bagpipes, and 21 gun salute will not be utilized for Class II funeral services.
6. Division Red cars in the funeral procession will be mixed among civilian cars and lights will not be flashing.
7. Motorized escort will be provided from the funeral service location to the burial site, if requested by the family.
8. All personnel are urged to wear the Class "A" uniform.
9. Pall bearers, if requested by the family, will wear the Class "A" uniform.
10. Designated seating will be encouraged.
11. Assistance will be provided in processing widow or survivor's benefits for the family of the deceased.

DIVISION OF FIRE SERVICES  
FUNERAL PROTOCOLS

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Death Notification And Funeral Protocol  
Continued

**Class III Death / Funeral  
Off-Duty Death**

A Class III death is a death that occurs while the employee is in an off-duty status and not related to any Division emergency activities. Upon notification of this type death, the following will be initiated:

1. The Fire Communications Bureau will notify the proper Fire Services personnel as outlined in the notification list with the exception of the Mayor and the Unit Bureau Supervisor.
2. Announcement of the death and any known funeral arrangements will be made over the vocalarm system.
- 3: The flag will be flown half mast at the Engine House of the assigned deceased employee. All other flags will be at full mast. Black tape may be worn over badges from date of notification until the day following the funeral services.
4. The Division of Fire Services will assist in notification of Pall-Bearers, if requested by the family. (Class "A" Uniform)
5. Honor Guard, Bagpipes, and 21 gun salute will not be utilized for Class III funeral services.
6. Class "A" uniforms will be optional for all personnel.
7. Seating in designated areas of the funeral services facility will be encouraged.
8. Motorized escort, if requested by family, from the funeral services to burial site will be furnished.
9. Red cars in the funeral procession will be mixed among civilian and lights will not be flashing.
10. Assistance will be provided for processing widow or survivor's benefits will be provided.

Note: All Other Active Member Deaths Will Be Handled In The Same Manner As A Class III (Off-Duty) Death.

**DIVISION OF FIRE SERVICES  
FUNERAL PROTOCOLS**

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**Death Notification And Funeral Protocol  
Continued**

**Class IV Death / Funeral  
Retirees**

In the event of the death of a retiree of the Division of Fire Services, the following is provided:

1. When a death notice of an active or retired employee of the Division of Fire Services is received, the notice will be read over the vocal alarm one time on each shift (A, B, & C), funeral date permitting.
2. Assistance will be provided in processing widow or survivor's death benefits.
3. Assistance in notifying Pall-Bearers, if requested by family.
4. Class "A" uniforms will be optional for all personnel.
5. Any family request will be honored, when possible, based upon expected participation.

DIVISION OF FIRE SERVICES  
CITY OF MEMPHIS

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**EMPLOYEE DATA SHEET**

NAME OF DECEASED: \_\_\_\_\_

SSN: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF EMPLOYMENT: \_\_\_\_\_

ASSIGNED COMPANY: \_\_\_\_\_ Shift \_\_\_\_\_

STATION ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ CITY: \_\_\_\_\_

STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF DEATH: \_\_\_\_\_

TIME OF DEATH: \_\_\_\_\_

LOCATION OF DEATH: \_\_\_\_\_

BRIEF SUMMARY: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE:** This information, except for home telephone number, should be made available for release to media, departmental members, and various outside agencies. Also, provide departmental photograph to media. Public Information Officer (PIO) should be contact point for outside agencies or Fire Departments.

DIVISION OF FIRE SERVICES  
CITY OF MEMPHIS

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**UPON NOTIFICATION THAT A DEATH HAS OCCURRED**

**INITIAL PROCEDURES**

- \_\_\_ 01. Immediately proceed to treating hospital.
  - \_\_\_ A. Advise all Officials that a death has occurred, through the Watch Commander.
    - \_\_\_ a. Fire Director
    - \_\_\_ b. Fire Deputy Director
    - \_\_\_ c. Mayor (After discussing with the Director)
    - \_\_\_ d. City Council members
    - \_\_\_ e. Union President/Vice-President
    - \_\_\_ f. Fire Department Chaplain
    - \_\_\_ g. Dispatch Fire Investigators for multiple still photographs and video of the death scene. Secure all pertinent areas with barrier tape.
    - \_\_\_ h. Have Safety Commander to secure all Protective Clothing and equipment used by injured fireman. Transport all items to secured area at OSHA office.
    - \_\_\_ i. Contact Employee Assistance Program (EAP) administrator for initiation of Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD).
    - \_\_\_ j. Others
  
- \_\_\_ 02. Have personnel in a RED car pick-up family members, if not at hospital. Do not release any information until ALL family has been notified of the death.
  
- \_\_\_ 03. Arrange quarters for out of town family if possible.
  - \_\_\_ a. Advise (family) that immediate family will be taken care of first. May not be possible for other members. (Identify immediate family).
  - \_\_\_ b. Contact IAFF local Union Office for assistance
  
- \_\_\_ 04. Arrange transportation for immediate family as needed.
  
- \_\_\_ 05. Set-up continuous detail at hospital for family assistance, if injured personnel is critical, but is not deceased.

DIVISION OF FIRE SERVICES  
CITY OF MEMPHIS

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Line Of Duty Death Checklist  
Continued

\_\_\_ 06. Determine desired funeral home to receive the body.

Funeral Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Funeral Director: \_\_\_\_\_

\* Arrange transportation to funeral home for immediate family.

\_\_\_ 07. Get names, telephone numbers, and locations of all immediate family.

\_\_\_ 08. Advise family of need for an autopsy. Have necessary Hospital forms signed.

\_\_\_ 09. Have "Release of medical Information" forms signed by Legal party.

\_\_\_ 10. Contact Fire Department Emergency Unit to transport body to morgue.

\_\_\_ 11. With the Physician's assistance, Contact Coroner's office for:

\_\_\_ a. Autopsy

\_\_\_ b. Toxicology Report

\_\_\_ c. Statement of cause of death, if no autopsy is to be done. (Medical Examiners Report)



DIVISION OF FIRE SERVICES  
CITY OF MEMPHIS

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Line Of Duty Death Checklist  
Continued

- \_\_\_ 12. Prepare News media release. (Assign PIO Officer for the Incident.)
- \_\_\_ a. Hold news release until all the family has been notified and has left the hospital. Release employee(s) data sheet with departmental photographs. Include brief details of the incident. Notify media that the investigation normally requires 60 - 90 days.
  - \_\_\_ b. Call the Watch Commander at Fire Communications and release information to the news media, general public, and Engine houses. On the engine house notification, use the vocal alarm. Include in the Engine house message that all flags will be placed in the Half Staff position immediately (day light hours only) and that Black Tape is to placed over the badges.
  - \_\_\_ c. Contact General Services and arrange for black bunting at selected fire stations; Fire Headquarters, and various sites as needed.
- \_\_\_ 13. Remain at the hospital until all family members have left.
- \_\_\_ 14. Contact the City Hall OJI Office and advise them of the death. Determine who is to contact State Department of Labor Compliance Office. This must be done verbally, immediately followed with written notification as soon as possible.
- \_\_\_ 15. CONTACT:
- \_\_\_ a. Public Safety Officers Benifits Office in Washington, D.C.(PSOB\LEAA) 1-202-307- 0635 for application for Federal Death Benefits. (\$128,000.00)
  - \_\_\_ b. National Fire Academy Phone-1-301-447-1272:
  - \_\_\_ c. IAFF (Through Local Union office)
  - \_\_\_ d. International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC)

DIVISION OF FIRE SERVICES  
CITY OF MEMPHIS

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Line Of Duty Death Checklist  
Continued

\_\_\_ 16. Initiate life insurance benefits by calling Insurance providers. (Note: Check Beneficiary prior to discussing this with family)

Beneficiary: \_\_\_\_\_ Age : \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

DIVISION OF FIRE SERVICES  
CITY OF MEMPHIS

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Line Of Duty Death Checklist  
Continued

**"INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES"**

\_\_\_ 17. Set up Fire Service Directors, "Investigative Team": Outline Departmental objectives of investigation. Assign team leader and have team meet within 24 hours of the incident.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ d. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_ e. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_ f. \_\_\_\_\_

18. \_\_\_ A. Get pictures and video of the SCENE (Fire Investigations)

\_\_\_ B. Get written statements from all individuals on the scene within 24 hours. These statements are confidential and are not to be reviewed by any individual including Supervisors. These documents are to be sealed and turned over to the Investigative Team Leader.

\_\_\_ C. Get printed chronological from communications.

\_\_\_ D. Contact Federal Emergency Management for assistance. Request assistance from the U. S. Fire Administration. If needed, request assistance from, NIOSH or State Department of Labor, etc.

\_\_\_ E. Get Investigative team members together.

- \_\_\_ 01. Go to death scene and video/take pictures.  
\_\_\_ 02. Designate individual to draw diagram/sketch of structure involved (floor plans etc.) for investigative team charts.  
\_\_\_ 03. View and video all personal protective equipment (including SCBA)  
\_\_\_ 04. Prepare S.C.B.A.(s) for shipment to NIOSH for evaluation if necessary.  
\_\_\_ 05. Review chronological report.  
\_\_\_ 06. Review all written statements. Note, send form letter.  
\_\_\_ 07. Set up interview teams for all companies on the scene.  
\_\_\_ 08. Interview all individuals on scene. (Tape record)  
\_\_\_ 09. Reconstruct scene from statements. Have diagrams and designs of fire scene for interviews.  
\_\_\_ 10. Write report.

DIVISION OF FIRE SERVICES  
CITY OF MEMPHIS

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Line Of Duty Death Checklist  
Continued

**"FUNERAL SERVICES"**

19. Immediately contact all Funeral Coordinators:
- a. Color Guard.
  - b. Funeral Cordination.
  - c. Appropriate personnel assigned for all funeral vehicles and coordination of funeral procession.
  - d. Other Bureau's as needed to assist in parking control, etc.)
  - e. Coordinator with local Police Department for police assistance and involvement in services.
- 01. 21 gun salute.
  - 02. Taps.
  - 03. Motorcycle escort.
- d. Cars for the funeral procession.
20. Coordinate with Coroner's Office and funeral home for release of body.
21. Contact Funeral Home and arrange family meeting.
- Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_
22. Meet family at Funeral Home. Advise family to have the following items with them.
- A. Have burial suit or uniform.
  - B. Have necessary family information in advance.
  - C. Arrange for picture of deceased, to be placed on casket, if closed services are required.

DIVISION OF FIRE SERVICES  
CITY OF MEMPHIS

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Line Of Duty Death Checklist  
Continued

\_\_\_ 23. Determine amount of Line of Duty Services to be incorporated into funeral.

- \_\_\_ a. Apparatus to carry casket.
- \_\_\_ b. American Flag for casket.
- \_\_\_ c. Color Guard.
- \_\_\_ d. Honor Guard.
- \_\_\_ e. Bag Pipes at services.
- \_\_\_ f. 21 Gun Salute at cemetery.
- \_\_\_ g. Taps to be played at cemetery
- \_\_\_ h. Police escort (Motorcycles)
- \_\_\_ i. Fire escort at hearse. (Motors): \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ j. 100' Aerial ladders set up at:  
Church: \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_ On route: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ k. Memorials instead of flowers.
- \_\_\_ l. Other Items: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ 24. Determine if News media will be allowed inside the church during services.

Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_

DIVISION OF FIRE SERVICES  
CITY OF MEMPHIS

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Line Of Duty Death Checklist  
Continued

\_\_\_ 25. Notify Pall Bearers: (Arrange a car for them) Arrive one (1) hour early at services.

- 01. \_\_\_\_\_
- 02. \_\_\_\_\_
- 03. \_\_\_\_\_
- 04. \_\_\_\_\_
- 05. \_\_\_\_\_
- 06. \_\_\_\_\_
- 07. \_\_\_\_\_
- 08. \_\_\_\_\_

Honorary Pall Bearers: Arrive one (1) hour early at services.

- 01. \_\_\_\_\_ 02. \_\_\_\_\_
- 03. \_\_\_\_\_ 04. \_\_\_\_\_
- 05. \_\_\_\_\_ 06. \_\_\_\_\_
- 07. \_\_\_\_\_ 08. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ 26. Ushers: Ten (10) Arrive one (1) hour early for seating.

DIVISION OF FIRE SERVICES  
CITY OF MEMPHIS

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Line Of Duty Death Checklist  
Continued

\_\_\_ 27. Determine dates of:

\_\_\_ a. Body ready for viewing: Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ b. Services: Date \_\_\_\_\_ : Time \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ c. Burial: Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ 28. Contact Fire Personnel with all information for the following:

\_\_\_ a. Ordering of flowers.

\_\_\_ b. Administration need to know information.

\_\_\_ 29. Contact Fire Communication with all information for VOCAL ALARM announcements that include uniform, memorials, black tape on badges. NOTE: See Operations Manual, for Funeral Protocols, Class I Death/Funeral section:

\_\_\_ 30. Order casket size flag and white gloves for Pall Bearers, Honor Guard and Dignitaries. This flag is not the standard 5'x 7'. Gloves should be returned to logistics after the services.

\_\_\_ 31. Contact Apparatus Maintenance Shop to have appropriate apparatus prepared for the funeral procession.

DIVISION OF FIRE SERVICES  
CITY OF MEMPHIS

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Line Of Duty Death Checklist  
Continued

- \_\_\_ 32. Contact Funeral Home for casket rollers and hooks for the funeral apparatus.
  
- \_\_\_ 33. Determine who (what company) will drive Apparatus in the Funeral procession.  
Contact Officer in charge and advise him to coordinate with Apparatus  
Maintenance Shop Chief.
  
- \_\_\_ 34. Determine routes from Funeral Home, Church and Cemetery to go by Engine  
Houses. Notify the following:
  - \_\_\_ a. Police Department Coordinator. (Motorcycle escorts)
  - \_\_\_ b. Funeral Home Director.
  - \_\_\_ c. Fire Director and all other necessary Fire personnel.
  - \_\_\_ d. Any other appropriate Bureaus.
  
- \_\_\_ 35. Determine order (placement) of funeral procession vehicles and apparatus. Other  
represented agencies will be put into the funeral procession. (Cars only, no  
apparatus from other municipalities)



DIVISION OF FIRE SERVICES  
CITY OF MEMPHIS

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Line Of Duty Death Checklist  
Continued

- \_\_\_36. Contact Engine Houses located in funeral procession route:
- \_\_\_a. Engine houses # \_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_, along the route to be draped in black.
  - \_\_\_b. Aerial equipment at raised position.
  - \_\_\_c. Lights on all equipment turned on.
  - \_\_\_d. All personnel in Class "A" uniform.
  - \_\_\_e. All personnel at attention when procession passes their location.
  - \_\_\_f. Fire Apparatus NOT in the procession route, BUT in the territory, may move to an intersection of the procession route with lights flashing and stand at attention while the funeral procession passes.
  - \_\_\_g. Companies to contact # \_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_:
- \_\_\_37. Get coordinators for Pall Bearers \_\_\_: Color Guard \_\_\_: Honor Guard \_\_\_:
- \_\_\_a. Get white gloves to coordinators.
  - \_\_\_b. Arrange CARS for transportation. (Color Guard and Pall Bearers)
  - \_\_\_c. Assure that Honor Guard will be in place.
- \_\_\_38. Coordinate between Minister, Fire Department Chaplain, and Funeral Director for schedule of services. (Check for continuity with prior decisions)
- \_\_\_39. Contact Bag Pipe player if available. Provide transportation for Bag Pipe player.
- \_\_\_40. Advise the Mayor and Fire Director of any expected participation in the services, such as, speaking, presenting the American Flag, etc.

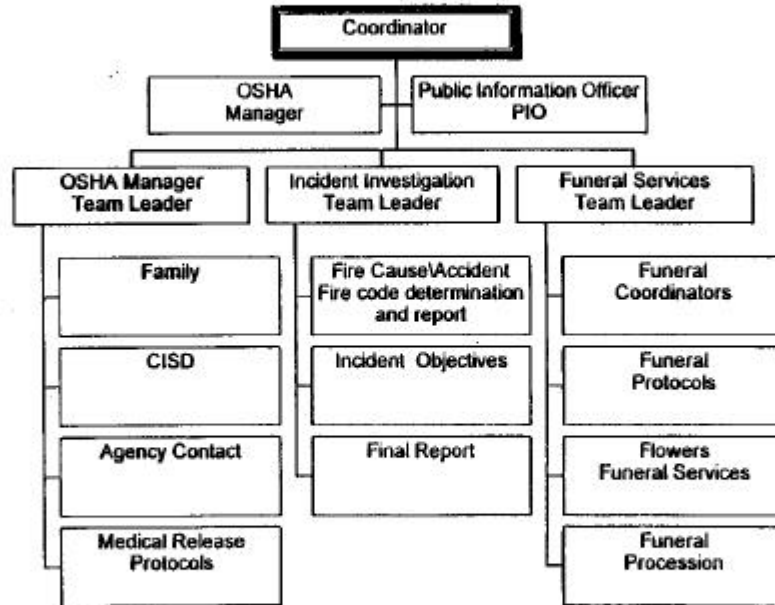
DIVISION OF FIRE SERVICES  
CITY OF MEMPHIS

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Line Of Duty Death Checklist  
Continued

- 41. Contact all Coordinators and schedule for all to go to the church and cemetery for planning of the following:
  - A. Seating arrangements for funeral services.
    - a. Uniformed fire personnel.
    - b. Dignitaries
    - c. Fire Union Officials.
    - d. Other agencies or visitors.
    - e. News media.
  - B. Placement and movement of:
    - a. Pall Bearers.
    - b. Color Guard.
    - c. Honorary Pall Bearers.
  - C. Placement of vehicles in the funeral procession.
- 42. Arrange meeting with Fire Director and all Ministers/ Coordinators to confirm that all aspects of the services are coordinated.
- 43. Keep a list for THANK YOU messages from the Fire Director and City Mayor.
- 44. Coordinate with Local IAFF Unon for reception following funeral.

**LINE OF DUTY DEATH**



NOTE: Coordinator should immediately schedule meeting with various team leaders to implement protocol checklist procedures.